CONSUMER TIME

A HANDFUL OF RICE

NETWORK: NBC DATE: May 19, 1945

ORIGIN: WRC TIME: 12:15-12:30 PM-EWT

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1. SOUND: CASH REGISTER RINGS TWICE....MONEY IN TILL.

2. JOHN: It's CONSUMER TIME!

3. SOUND: CASH REGISTER....CLOSE DRAWER.

4. ANNCR: During the next 15 minutes the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations make their facilities available as a public service for the presentation of CONSUMER TIME by the War Food Administration.



5. JOHN: Two weeks ago, CONSUMER TIME brought you a story about starvation diets in war-torn Europe from three delegates at the United Nations Conference in San Francisco——then, a few days later, the biggest, most welcome story of World War II yet to reach our ears...the unconditional surrender of the Nazi forces in Europe...was flashed to the four corners of the world. That half of the battle is over...the job in Europe is now one of rehabilitation and reconstruction....of food for peace.

6. FREYMAN: And so our thoughts and our efforts turned to the other half of the battle...the Battle of the Pacific and Far East. You know, Johnny, there is also a story about the lack of food in the war-torn Phillippines.

[illegible]

7. JOHN: After three years of Jap occupation, Mrs. Freyman, these liberated people can now tell us of human suffering and privation...of death-dealing starvation on meager rice rations allowed by the Japs.

8. FREYMAN: ....on a mere handful of rice, Johnny, when they needed a whole pound.

9. JOHN: To us, Mrs. Freyman, a small ration of rice isn't so important. But rice is basic to the diet of the diet of the Filipino people...Rice and fish are their main foods...plus tropical fruits like bananas, coconuts and avocados...and papayas, a few vegetables...canned milk and salmon they used to import from this country.

WATCH SWITCH COMING UP 12:17 P.M. EWT. CUE UNDERLINED.

10. FREYMAN: Johnny, I want to know more about the food problems in the Philippines. The War Food Administration recently increased the set-aside on top grades of rice, to make more rice available to the military and to the people of the Philippines. But I'm afraid we can't fully appreciate how much this means to them. We need a better understanding of how Jap occupation affected their food supply.

11. JOHN: And I agree, Mrs. Freyman. So, for the wartime food story of the Philippine Islands, we will go to San Francisco...to hear Bert Silen, former NBC War Correspondent at Manila, who was interned three years in Santo Tomas prision...Manuel Manahan (Mah-nah-hahn), member of Filipino guerrilla forces and editor of the Philippine underground newspaper...and _____ _____ of the United States Army who has just returned from duty with General MacArthur's invasion forces... CONSUMER TIME takes you to San Francisco, California.

13. SWITCH TO SAN FRANCISCO: 9:17

14. SOUND: BIG GUNS, BOMBS FALLING IN BACKGROUND.

15. SILEN: SIGN OFF FROM MANILA.

16. SOUND: GUNS FADE OUT.

17. SILEN: Peace HAS come to Manila, and this is Bert Silen greeting you today from San Francisco's radio city. My three years of Jap internment taught me one thing.....food is so important, it becomes life itself, under the unbelievable conditions of war. We found that out in Santo Tomas. And so did the thousands of people who starved --- and died --- in Manila. I only know from hearsay what went on in Manila. But my good friend Manuel Manahan, now serving as Philippine press representative at the United Nations conference, he saw what happened. Manuel is working hard and eating heavily these days...he's trying to gain back some of that eighty pounds he lost during seven months as a Japanese prisoner of war in the dreaded Fort Santiago dungeon. And he seems to be doing very well.

18. MANAHAN: I still have thirty pounds to go, Bert. I hope everyone in America realizes how wonderful this food tastes to all of us here from the Philippines...I guess that's the way you feel ...I guess that's the way you feel, too, isn't it?

19. SILEN: Very much so, Manuel. It's hard to put into words how we feel about our freedom, after what seemed like centuries of isolation from the world.

20. MANAHAN: That's what it was, no matter where you were in the Philippines...isolation from the world. The Japs gave the people of the Philippines freedom, all right...freedom to starve to death.

21. SILEN: The whole trouble was, of course, that the cities had always depended on the food grown in the provinces and imported from other countries.

22. MANAHAN: Well, it would be just like, say you cut off your city of San Francisco here from the rest of California and the rest of the world. The Japs prohibited all fishing except by Japs and commandeered all the rice. They took over all the transportation. There was no way to get food from the provinces to the cities. Afterwhile there were no trucks, ponies, no pushcarts. No food was coming in from outside countries. Instead some of our food was going out to Japan.

23. SILEN: So it was rice rations, mud fish, and whatever you could scare up.

24. MANAHAN: When the Japs invaded our country, Bert, they full intended to live off our land...to eat our food. They prohibited our fishing so we wouldn't be able to contact any Americans at sea, and so they'd have our fish for themselves. We used to the Japs unloading ships at the ports. They'd unload ammunition, guns, trucks, horses and other war supplies. Then hundreds of Jap trucks would go out to the granaries, and load up on rice....and scrap metal for Japan. Why, one day Why, one day our Intelligence force counted about 280 trucks filled with rice, going down to shipping ports from granaries all over the islands.

25. SILEN: No doubt a good many of Jap trucks never reached the ports.

26. MANAHAN: You're right. This was before the fall of Bataan and Corregidor...I was with the Philippine Army Intelligence then. We'd filter through Jap lines into the northern provinces, to find out what was going on, and to give those dirty Nips all the trouble we could. Once they sent a whole Army battalion around seven hundred miles into the mountains to see what was going on. All they found were their wrecked trucks.

27. SILEN: ....Sounds like a good story, Manuel...let's hear more of it.

28. MANAHAN: Well, the guerrillas knew when these Japs trucks would be coming over the mountain roads...there were a lot of streams and rivers...and most of the bridges were wooden...Just before the Japs would get to a bridge, our men would send a carabau cart filled with straw out on the bridge...they'd dump the straw, light it, burn the bridge and then ambush the trucks. That's how we got our food and arms on Bataan. There was plenty of sabotage...So the Japs sent this whole battalion into the mountains after us.

29. SILEN: I understand the people in the provinces had little better food supply than the city people.

30. MANAHAN: Perhpas a little better, yes...But it was hard in the provinces, too. We had never grown enough rice in the Philippines to take care of our sixteen million people. The provinces were short on rice. It was rationed to everybody. Even the people who grew rice couldn't keep any for themselves. They had to stand in line to get their share, too. And the ration wasn't enough to keep a family going. What's more, the farmers had no incentive to produce rice, or sugar or any other food, for that matter.

31. SILEN: ....Because the more they produced, the more the Japs took away.

32. MANAHAN: Precisely. The Japs took the Carabans away from the farmers for meat...so the farmers did not have any animals... that's one reason rice production went down so. The farmers would kill their work animals for meat rather than to let the Japs have the meat. The Japs took our sugar for conversion into alcohol fuel.

33. SILEN: They took about everything they could lay their hands on, didn't they.

34. MANAHAN: Even then, they couldn't keep their Army fed. The Jap soldiers, on their own initiative, would take food away from our people. Perhaps a farmer would start for Manila with ten sacks of rice in his cart. At every Jap outpost, he'd have to pay a fee to get through, maybe one sack of rice, or two. By the time he got to Manila, he wouldn't have much rice left, perhaps only two or three sacks out of the original ten. So he'd have to charge almost as much for these few sacks as for all ten, in order to make the trip worthwhile. Eventually, the people in the provinces wouldn't bring food to the city because of the trouble and the danger.

35. SILEN: All this pressure on the food supply gave rise to a terrific black market. Americans have no idea of what happens when there is no legal control over food prices. Eggs eventually went up to $15 apiece. In Manila, a pound of coffee cost $185...sugar was $150 a pound in Manila...dry beans, $150 a pound...evaporated milk was $35 a can...powdered milk, $175 for a pound can...rice on the market cost $170 for two and a fifth pounds.....

36. MANAHAN: And, not everybody could pay these terrific prices. The first six months of occupation, prices weren't so bad. No one dreamed it could last three years. But afterwhile, the people in Manila did almost anything for a little food. They'd smuggle rice in through the Jap lines, carrying two or three pounds in their clothes. Starving men, women and children would wait outside the few restaurants still operating in Manila at fabulous prices, with empty shells in their hands. As soon as the people eating there would leave these poor starving people would rush in and fill their coconut shells with the leftover food off the table and the floor. And you remember all those food stalls in Manila, Bert...

37. SILEN: Yes, weren't there about five hundred of them?

38. MANAHAN: But only about twenty or thirty ever had any food to sell... And starving people would crawl to the stalls, looking for food and just die there.

39. SILEN: About that time, the Japs no doubt had a big story in their Manila Tribune about 10,000 cans of milk just arrived from Japan, as a gift to the nursing mothers of Manila.

40. MANAHAN: Yes, only the underground knew the real truth about all those deals, and we lost no time telling the people. The Japs confiscated 77,000 cases of American canned milk to send to the Mothers of Japan "as a gift from the Philippines." And generously left 10,000 cans for our people.

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41. SILEN: They were always pulling that hypocritical charity and generosity gag. How about the time they took pictures down at Pier 7 of Philippine rice...said it was imported Saigon rice...and then distributed it to the people through the government.

42. MANAHAN: We knew about that, too. Some of our own people were stevedores on those docks. That 20,000 sacks of rice was our own. The Jap-controlled paper was always publishing threats of the death penalty for food hoarders...and harping at the people in Manila to go to the provinces by saying that there was more food outside the city. That wasn't true. And that wasn't the real reason the Japs wanted the people to leave the city.

43. SILEN: You can be sure they'd have some ulterior motive.

44. MANAHAN: They wanted to get rid of all the transients coming in and out of Manila...they couldn't keep track of them...Manila was really the hotbed of the underground. The Japs made all the people who had lived in Manila for five years, either renting or owning their house, register every member of the household, including the servants. That way the Japs thought they could easily find any spies. Besides, the Japs wanted the accomodations for their own Army. And when they were looking for two or three certain people in a village out in the provinces, they'd round up everybody, and kill a lot of innocent people. So the people in Manila didn't want to go to the provinces.

45. SILEN: What amazes me, Manuel, is how <u>you</u> ever got back in circulation, once they had you in Fort Santiago.

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46. MANAHAN: Let's just say I was lucky. That fact I was with the Army Intelligence meant I became a prisoner of war. They questioned me plenty...and did a lot of other things too...but they released us after seven months. As tough as it was, that experience in Santiago was almost a break.

47. SIIEN: How can you say that, Manuel?

48. MANAHAN: Well, while we were in Fort Santiago we had a chance to learn about Jap methods of operations from the other prisoners...how they spied on their own spies...so we were able to work out a way to counteract their spy system. They just didn't get any cooperation from the Filipinos, no matter what they tried.

49. SIIEN: By the way, Manuel, what about that underground paper....

50. MANAHAN: Our paper was the only way the people of the Philippines knew that the Americans were hopping from island to island... that there was any hope of liberation. We had to mimeograph it on small paper...about letter-size...so it could be easily hidden in a person's clothes. We put out an edition of about thirty-two pages every two weeks or every month, depending on the news we had and also on the circumstances. We had to move our editorial rooms in an awful hurry sometimes.

51. SIIEN: I'll bet you did. I've never ceased to marvel at your underground.

52. MANAHAN: Believe me, Bert, we suffered a lot and we lost a lot of fine men, but it wasn't in vain. Our guerrillas were everywhere... all over Manila, and in every town, village and mountain section. They were recruited where they lived and would usually stay right there. The people would feed their local unit as best they could...because it protected them from the Japs. Guerrillas usually managed to get two meals a day, of the kind we had in the Philippines then.

53. SILEN: .....a handful of rice and some dried dili fish...

54. MANAHAN: And whatever they could rustle. All the cats and dogs disappeared mysteriously from the city of Manila. As you well know, after three years of Jap occupation, Manila was just a city of walking skeletons. It would have been worse if we hadn't had some food hidden away in our homes when the Japs first came.

55. SILEN: You mean, some of the canned goods turned over to the people when the American forces left.

56. MANAHAN: Yes...that food really saved thousands of lives...

57. SILEN: It saved my family, I know that. The Japs had let the people interned at Santo Tomas take in a certain amount of canned goods...We had about forty cases when we went in, for myself, my wife and three daughters. Our supplies lasted until last Thanksgiving when we opened our last can of spam and last can of pineapple. From then on, you know what it was. The Japs had isolated our camp entirely in February of 1944, and they fully intended that all prisoners should be left there to die.

58. MANAHAN: So it was every man for himself, until the Americans came.

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59. SIIEN: It was a grim business, Manuel. At first, the Japs, in their usual generous mood...had given a camp bus in which people could be taken to and from the hospital. We had an American driver, accompanied by a Jap guard, who could bring in food, by bribing the guards. If the driver was bringing eggs, at a dollar apiece, the bribe was ten cents an egg. In the early days, there was almost a constant flow of people going to and from the hospital.

60. MANAHAN: And a constant flow of food coming into Santo Tomas.

61. SIIEN: Yes, because the patients were allowed to bring back food... what the Japs thought was the patients' own food. When a patient was discharged, he'd bring extra food purchased on the outside and turn it over to the camp.

62. MANAHAN: And the Japs never caught on.

63. SIIEN: I'm sure they didn't. In July of 1944, they closed all outside institutions. We knew this ahead of time, and were able to stock up tremendous food supplies, at least what seemed like a lot of food then...The Japs never did realize that we had stocked the hospitals heavily before they closed it. They thought it was just the normal hospital food supply and did we have to pay for our black market food! It cost me $10,000 to feed my family...myself, my wife and three daughters... during our internment.

64. MANAHAN: Then food prices were even higher in Santo Tomas than in Manila.

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65. SILEN: Probably close to double. But food was more important than money. We didn't care what it cost! When the going was really tough, the Dominican Fathers in the seminary, next door to the camp would smuggle a little food to us...small amounts of bacon and beans...We'd hide this for three or four weeks. When we had enough to do something with, we'd turn it over to the central kitchen in the camp. The cooks would grind it up and put it in kind of a gravy. The Fathers also smuggled in a few peanuts and a little guava jelly every so often for the children.

66. MANAHAN: This must have been dangerous business.

67. SILEN: It was...so we could only bring in small quantities at a time. Sometimes at night, the Fathers would put food they'd bought with the internees' money in a sack or bundle of paper and throw it over the fence, where we'd be waiting for it... Then we had one place dug out under the fence, between the seminary and camp where we could burrow under and drag in food the Fathers had gotten for us. Santo Tomas also became a city of walking skeletons.

68. MANAHAN: But today, it's a happier story, Bert. The people of the Philippines may not be gaining back much of the weight they lost, but they aren't losing any weight. There are no more walking skeletons in Manila.

WATCH SWITCH COMING UP 12:28 P.M. EWT. CUE UNDERLINED.

69. SILEN: Thank you, Manuel Manahan, for helping me tell this story of food in the Philippines under the Japs. This is Bert Silen, returning you to CONSUMER TIME IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

70. SWITCH TO WASHINGTON, D. C.

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SILEN: Thank you, Manuel Manahan of the Philippine press, for helping me report on the difficult food problems in the Philippines during Jap occupation.

To American liberation forces landing on the beaches at Leyte, cheering Filipino familes must have been a sad but heartwarming sight...sad, because these welcoming parties showed the toll of three years without proper food, clothing and medical care. One American doughboy who received such a welcome was Private A. Purdy, Jr., of San Jose, California... who served with the 96th Division, 10th U.S. Army. Private Purdy is now recovering from shrapnel wounds at Dibble General Hospital in Menlo Park, California. He can add another chapter to our story.

PURDY: And when you say, Mr. Silen, that the sight of those welcoming parties on Leyte was both sad and heartwarming, you're certainly right. They were the hungriest people I've ever seen...mostly they wanted rice. And they needed medical care badly. About the best we could do, when we hit the beach soon after H-Hour, was to give them some of our rations.

SILEN: I've heard many Army men say just that, Private Purdy...they <u>had</u> to give food to the hollow-eyed youngsters...or <u>they</u> wouldn't have been able to eat.

PURDY: That's just how it was, sir. Of course, within a short while, the military civil affairs had food and medical care for these people, including some rice confiscated from Jap warehouses nearby.

SILEN: And the rice made up for a lot of things they couldn't have, at that early stage of the game.

PURDY: It seemed to, all right. There was a big washtub filled with rice at civil affairs headquarters. Quite a few Filipinos along the way would ask us how to get there. They would rather have food and clothing any day, than money. And we sure got a bang out of the way all the little kids would call every American they'd see, "Joe".

SILEN: They forgot the "G. I.", but they could remember the "Joe"...

PURDY: That must have been it. The kids always knew when it was chow-time, too. They'd hang around the kitchen with their empty little pails. When we finished eating, they'd beg for the leavings in our messkits. They weren't bothered one bit by the mixed-up collection of food they'd get. They'd dig in it with their fists and feed their faces, grinning all the time. They could certainly hold a lot, for such little fellows. But I guess they'd been hungry a long time and were just making up for a lot of lost meals. I tell you, Mr. Silen...I never knew what starvation could do to people until we hit that beach on Leyte.

71. JOHN: You know, Mrs. Freyman, what we've just heard about the Jap occupation of the Philippines is justa a re-echo of the way their downfallen Axis partners, the Nazis, did business. While the Japs talked about "neighborhood associations", and "Co-Prosperity Leagues", they starved the people they were talking to.

72. FREYMAN: Imagine, Johnny, having to live on a few dried fish, and five ounces of rice a day...that's about what the Jap ration of rice amounted to....

73. JOHN: We Americans can't imagine that kind of living. We can only hear about it from the people who were there...people like Bert Silen and Manuel Manahan who survived the terrible years of Jap invasion and occupation. Perhaps from them, we can learn to be more generous with what we have and more grateful for it.

74. FREYMAN: And now, Johnny.....about next week's program.

75. JOHN: Next week we're going to hear the inside story of the cotton fabrics situation...why cotton is scarce...and when we may expect more. Be with us then, for another edition of....

76. SOUND: CASH REGISTER

77. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME!

78. SOUND: CASH REGISTER

79. JOHN: How your money buys a living in wartime!

80. SOUND: CASH REGISTER....CLOSE DRAWER.

81. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME, written by Dorothea Hansen was presented by the War Food Administration, through the facilities of the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations. This broadcast period for CONSUMER TIME has been made available as a public service.
This is the National Broadcasting Company.

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